



MCCC News



Fort Worth

November 2019

Dallas

Three Categories of New Amigas

It's kind of a special month this time, not for Halloween or anything like that, but that we have some actual Amiga-related news this time around. In the events realm, AmiWest (www.amiwest.net) is coming up on October 23rd thru the 27th, so if you're going to be in California around then, it's something to check out. If you're traveling even further, I hope you already left, because the Amiga 34 (www.amiga34.de) show in Neuss, Germany happened on the 12th and 13th. This one is worth noting, as it is/was the debut of the Vampire V4 stand-alone system, with boards and pre-made systems first being available for sale there. According to info I've read, it is using an early revision of the core/firmware which does not yet support all of the board's hardware features, but those will be addressed in future core updates. Finally, around the start of this month, the new 3.12 version of the MorphOS operating system for PowerPC systems and Mac hardware was released, offering a smattering of new features and updates. You can check the www.morphos-team.net website for details and downloads. I'm hoping to show it at the meeting if possible.

All this frisky talk about new and updated Amiga (and related) hardware and operating systems has gotten me thinking about all the various new forms the Amiga, or at

least things that want to occupy the same niches as the Amiga, have taken over the last several years since we had a vacuum in place of an official Amiga leadership position. As I see it, there are three primary approaches to a "new Amiga", regardless of whether it exists in the form of true hardware or emulation on another system. There is plenty of cross-pollination and blend between the categories, but these three are how I define them.

First, there is the "Retro Amiga." This is pretty much a recreation of a standard common Amiga model, such as an A500 or A1200, for the primary purpose of running classic games, demos and software in the modern day. Motherboard recreations and many emulation packages look to this goal. While it can offer enhancements or extra features over a basic Amiga, that is not a priority. Second, there is the "High End Amiga." This is meant to recreate and improve upon the features of the more powerful Amiga systems, like an A4000 or A1200 with a generous amount of hardware expansion. Systems like the Vampire family of boards fall into this category. The goal here is to go beyond the capabilities of original Amiga hardware, yet retain as much compatibility with the classic system and its software as possible. Finally, there is the "Future Amiga" which works to push the Amiga-like experience into something modern and more competitive with current Windows, Linux, or Mac systems. These are more focused on the operating system than the

hardware itself, and examples include systems running Amiga OS4, MorphOS, or AROS. Compatibility with classic Amiga software and applications is less of a priority here, especially not 'metal banging' old apps like games or demos, but productivity software might be expected to run, though new software written to take advantage of the new system is preferable.

As I stated, there is a lot of smear and cross-talk between these different types I've laid out, and I'm not here (right now) to say which approach is better, or which approach to each approach is better, but I will give my opinions for what I believe each approach should offer at a minimum.

For the "Retro Amiga," and its primary goal of playing past games and software, whether by emulation or recreation of classic hardware, I believe that recreation should be as close and compatible as possible, so that 'metal-banging' software would have no idea it wasn't running on a real Amiga 500. The goal should be accurate emulation or recreation, as opposed to improving the specs of the original. The improvements come in the form of modern accessibility, such as being able to output to a current monitor or television, scaling up to HD resolutions as needed, and play its software from present drives or solid state media rather than old floppy discs of failing reliability, using disk image files or whatever formats work best. The ability to swap easily between different hard-

ware profiles, such as A500 or A1200, Kickstart 3.1 or 1.2, should be accessible as well. As the idea is to bring old Amiga games and software to the present day, best to remove as many hurdles as reasonable to that goal.

As the “High End Amiga” concept represents the middle ground between ‘retro’ and ‘future’, its minimum requirements straddle the two worlds. While it can’t and probably shouldn’t achieve the raw power of the bleeding edge, it should at least significantly improve upon the old Amiga high end of something like the Amiga 4000 with a 68060 CPU and extra video card. However it should also retain as much classic hardware compatibility as possible—not necessarily the cycle-accurate emulation I advocate on the ‘Retro’ end, but it should be able to handle the majority of old games and demos the way real expanded Amiga users do, by using WHDLoad to install and launch them. The ability to use modern displays, modern storage, and modern input devices like mice and game controllers are a necessity, with the updated hardware and operating environment being able to make use of the available screen modes, storage and audio beyond the scope of legacy systems. It’s for those that take their Amiga usage seriously, though maybe not so seriously that they won’t fire up Lemmings or Worms from time to time.

With the “Future Amiga,” compatibility with past Amiga applications is limited to the things which behaved nicely within the confines of the operating system, with old ‘metal banger’ software requiring running an emulator. Some schools of thought believe any compatibility with past Amiga software should be dropped, as the Amiga API can hold back the full possible power of the hardware the operating systems run upon, and make migrating to newer, more future-proof systems, such as Intel or ARM-based processors, more difficult. I am against ditching the Amiga API entirely, mostly because the software created directly for OS4 or MorphOS or AROS has over the years not taken up the slack and not filled the productivity hole that would be left if all the software for 68K-based Amigas were no longer available. As it stands though, I think the current “Future Amiga” systems are all nice in their own niches and progressing well, if a bit slowly (expected for not being backed by huge software outfits). If they can progress into the future without completely losing sight of the past Amiga stuff, they will be worth my time. But then again, there will be the “High End” and the “Retro” to pick up that ball should the “Future” drop it entirely.

...by Eric Schwartz
From the AmiTech Gazette,
October 2019

Links and Videos

Amiga Video Links:

Retro Man Cave—SWAG UK User Group

<https://youtu.be/PyapwCZT1xY>

10MARC—The Checkmate 1500+ Case.

<https://youtu.be/i00iRPfcfAU>

10MARC—Amiga ROMulator Review

<https://youtu.be/Bfqpl3jSFyE>

The Amiga CD-64/Hombre

<https://youtu.be/FSibCddeJWM>

Non-Amiga links: (but interesting)

The Gaming Experience for Non-Gamers

<https://youtu.be/ax7f3JZJHSw>

Ahoy—Finding the First Ever Video Game

<https://youtu.be/uHQ4WCU1WQc>

Finally, some late-breaking news and pics from “Amiga34” in Germany. Featuring the debut sales of the Vampire stand-alone system (the limited amount sold out very fast) and preview of MorphOS ported to X86 architecture.

Photos from Amiga34 in Neuss:

<https://www.amiga-news.de/en/news/AN-2019-10-00034-EN.html>

...From the AmiTech Gazette,
October 2019

November Calendar

November 9 — MCCC Meeting
2:00 PM — Burleson Public Library
248 SW Johnson Ave., Burleson

November 9 — Board of Director’s Meeting
Approximately 4:00 PM — Location TBD

December 1 — Newsletter Deadline — 8:00 AM

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<http://www.amigamccc.org>